Alexa Mattiello

Educational Philosophies

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One educational philosophy that I came across that I found interesting was *Essentialism*. This philosophy was proposed by William Bagley, James D. Koerner, H.G. Rickover, Paul Copperman and Theodore Sizer. Essentialists believe that “there is a common core of knowledge that needs to be transmitted to students in a systematic, disciplined way.” The core of this curriculum is based on essential knowledge and skills and academic rigor. Essentials understand that curriculum may change with the times and have accepted that it must adapt to change. In addition, they believe that schooling should be practical and prepare students to become valuable members of society. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of facts and training students to read, write, speak, and compute clearly and logically. Lastly, essentialists believe that schools should not try to set or influence policies and that students should be taught hard work, respect for authority and discipline. I can agree to all of these ideas that the essentialists have proposed because to me, they’re all pretty logical. I agree that school curriculum these days seems to be lacking a lot of basic skills needed for students to make it in the real world. For example, in all of my 12 years of schooling, I never learned how to balance a checkbook or anything about banking for that matter. Not that things like that should be a requirement, but it should at least be an option. I also agree that schools should not try to set or influence policy. Nowadays, it seems as those schools decide exactly what should be taught and how it should be taught. Teachers have basically become the messenger between the school board and the students. They don’t have as much of a say anymore (for the most part) in what they teach and how they teach it. Set standards and policies take away teacher’s creativity in their assignments and lesson plans. As a hopeful elementary school teacher, I hope that something changes by the time I graduate so that I don’t end up reading assignments straight from a book but instead get to create some of my own.

Another philosophy that I found was called *Existentialism.* Some of the people who contributed to this philosophy include, A.S. Neil, Jean Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. According to this theory, “each of us has the free will to develop as we see fit.” In the existentialist classroom, subject matter takes second place to helping the students understand and appreciate themselves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Students are also given a variety of options for subjects to choose from. While I don’t agree with all of the parts of this philosophy, I can appreciate the idea of teachers taking the time to develop each student’s skills and individuality. I think it is extremely important for children to receive one on one attention as often as possible so that they can get a sense that they’re just as important as their classmates. I can also understand giving students options for their course study because I think students will work harder and produce better work when they’re working on something that they’re actually interested in. However, giving students too much freedom to choose can be detrimental at times. In my opinion, there needs to be some sort of structure in the classroom otherwise students might get the idea that they can do whatever they want. Not everything that I learned throughout the past 12 years of school has necessarily been something that I chose to learn, but it was beneficial to me in one way or another. If students got to choose exactly what they learned, I guarantee you that half of them will choose to opt out of anything math related. It just simply wouldn’t work if choosing what you learned was an option for everyone.

Overall, I didn’t find one philosophy that I agreed 100% with. There were bits and pieces of theories that I could identify with but its hard to completely accept an entire philosophy.